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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 000126

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

1. Mideast
2. Gaza Crisis

Key stories in the media:

HaQaretz and other media reported on feverish efforts to achieve a cease-fire by this weekend. Israel Radio reported that Amos Gilad, the head of the Defense Ministry's political-security bureau, will

again travel to Cairo today. The cabinet has not yet discussed the conclusions of his visit to Egypt yesterday. Israel Radio cited the international newspaper Al-Hayat quoting Gilad as saying in Cairo that Israel will not be able to pull out from Gaza if there is no permanent cease-fire. Yediot and Israel Radio quoted Egyptian sources as saying that Israel has given a Qgreen light in principle to a cease-fire. The Jerusalem Post quoted PA Representative to the UN Riyad Mansour as saying yesterday that the Palestinians will press for an international force if the cease-fire bid fails. Mohamad Nazal, Hamas politburo member in Damascus was quoted as saying in an interview with Nazareth-based Assennara that Hamas didnQt agree on all the items of the Egyptian initiative. He insisted that while [Hamas] does not refuse having international forces monitor the situation, they will not agree to a permanent tahdiya [truce] but rather a temporary one.

All media reported that yesterday Israel assassinated Hamas Interior Minister Said Siam. The head of HamasQs domestic security apparatus was also killed in the air raid. Yediot reported that Hamas is calling for a painful revenge. HaQaretz quoted Palestinian sources as saying that Israel has eliminated HamasQs QIranian phalanx.

HaQaretz quoted PM Ehud Olmert as saying that the spat with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is over.

HaQaretz reported that the U.S. has drawn up a document to demarcate the future borders between Israel and a Palestinian state.

Leading media reported that in Washington during the weekend FM Tzipi Livni will sign a deal with the U.S. on preventing arms smuggling.

On Wednesday Maariv reported that Israel is requesting an urgent answer from the U.S. regarding the feasibility of the Nautilus missile defense system, despite the fact that the Israeli defense establishment prefers the QIron Dome.Q Over the past few days media reported that the U.S. has expressed interest in the QColor Red warning system installed in Israeli communities.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Fatah is cracking down on Hamas in the West Bank. Dr. Saeb Erekat chief Palestinian negotiator was quoted as saying in an interview with Assennara that Fatah will not go back to Gaza on an Israeli tank or according to an Israeli agreement, and their only way is through a national Palestinian reconciliation.

Yediot reported that President-elect Barack Obama intends to deliver a speech in an Arab capital, probably Cairo, during his first month in office.

HaQaretz reported that two moderate leaders of Hamas-Gaza have accused the movementQs Damascus leadership of bringing a disaster to Gaza by deciding to break the period of quiet.

Leading media reported that Israeli authorities have arrested Mauricio Segal, a dual Israeli-Argentine citizen, who offered Iran information in exchange for money.

Israel Radio reported that the police have arrested an anarchist militant who threatened to murder DM Ehud Barak.

Maariv reported that the 2008 inflation rate in Israel was 3.8% -- the third year in a row that it exceeded official expectations.

Maariv presented the results of a TNS/Teleseker poll on voting intentions for the Knesset elections:
In brackets: Maariv's January 8 poll):
Likud 28 (29); Kadima: 26 (27); Labor Party: 17 (17); Yisrael Beiteinu: 14 (13); Shas: 9 (9); Arab parties: 10 (10); United Torah Judaism: 5 (6); Meretz: 5 (5); National-Religious Party-Jewish Home 3 (4); National Union 3 (0).

QHow would you rate [IsraelQs] military activity?Q Very good: 82.1%; good; 11.6%; average: 3.5%; bad: 0.9%; not good: 0.5%; 1.4% were undecided.

QWhat should Israel do now?Q Continue the fighting and expand it by bringing in more forces until the full elimination of [HamasQs] military capability: 53.1%; continue the fighting without expanding

the operation at this time, while seeking a diplomatic arrangement that would guarantee the cessation of rocket fire: 36.1%; stop the fighting and seek a diplomatic arrangement: 7.9%; 2.8% were undecided.

Results of the HaQaretz/Dialog poll:

QHas the Gaza operation been a success or a failure?Q Success: 78%; failure: 9%; 13% were undecided.

QHas Israel used excessive force?Q No: 82%; yes: 13%; 5% were undecided.

The Jerusalem Post cites a McClatchy/Ipsos poll that found that 44% of Americans support Israel's use of force, in comparison to 18% who think Hamas's use of force is appropriate. And 57% think the latter is using excessive force -Q something only 36% believe Israel to be doing.

I. Mideast:

Summary:

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QThe U.S. administration in effect calling Olmert a liar, if not worse, is something new that does not bode well for our relations with the next president.

Columnist and former Meretz Party Chairman Yossi Sarid wrote in Ha'aretz: QYou, Barack Hussein Obama, are our last chance, and if that too fades -- and evil is determined against us, all hope is lost.

Shmuel Rosner wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: QOn Middle East issues Dennis Ross's influence will apparently be as important [as Gen. Jim Jones] -Q perhaps even greater.

Block Quotes:

I. "Olmert, Look for New Digs"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (1/16): QCondoleezza Rice has enough reasons to be angry with us for falsely promising to dismantle illegal outposts -- a promise that was never kept. But if she felt deceived, at least she didn't say so publicly. We have had dealings with hostile presidents, and some of our prime ministers didn't get along very well with presidents who were not fans of the Zionist movement. But the U.S. administration in effect calling Olmert a liar, if not worse, is something new that does not bode well for our relations with the next president.... While criminal indictment looms in the horizon and everyone knows he will be out of a job after the February elections, Olmert's conduct these days is not totally free of personal motives. What seems obvious now is that he is trying to push a policy that will erase the stain of his failure in the Second Lebanon War and allow him to go down in Israeli history as the great victor of the war against Hamas.

II. "Go Your Own Way"

Columnist and former Meretz Party Chairman Yossi Sarid wrote in Ha'aretz (1/16): QYou, Barack Hussein Obama, are our last chance, and if that too fades -- and evil is determined against us, all hope is lost. We are the prisoner who is stuck in a cell; without the help of others, we will never succeed in extricating ourselves from the bonds of our natural fear and the historical accounting. And there are no QothersQ except for America, for which no substitute has been found, even in its time of weakness. The Israeli politicians -- the singers of all the wars -- will try to feed you Qdirect negotiationsQ and Qwithout external pressureQ; these refrains are groundless. Ask your advisers, Dennis Ross and Dan Kurtzer and Martin Indyk, and they will tell you.... In any case, you have no chance of being considered a friend of Israel for long, unless you become a lifelong slave of the next Israeli prime minister. Look what happened this week to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who faithfully stuck to former prime minister

Ariel Sharon and incumbent Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.... That's what will happen to you when you don't agree to wag like a tail; you will also be interrupted in the middle of a meeting in Philadelphia and reprimanded, when you announce your intention of talking to Iran and Syria, and perhaps to Hizbullah and Hamas as well. On the contrary, follow your own path and talk to them, talk to everyone, talk to anyone who is willing to talk. For eight years they didn't talk, they only tried to educate the entire world using sanctions and the sword, and this is the result.

III. "Ross and Disengagement"

Shmuel Rosner wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (1/16): QObamaQs Kissinger will be General Jim Jones: He will at least carry a similar title. But on Middle East issues Dennis RossQs influence will apparently be as important -Q perhaps even greater. Rumors about the appointment of the peace envoy to a position of the Obama administrationQs senior adviser on Middle East affairs was not sincerely welcome among some branches of the American left. Too many Jews are busying themselves with the Middle East in this administration, fumed Roger Cohen of the International Herald Tribune Q- at times a harsh critic of Israel.... Last week some shadows went by in the friendly Obama-Israel skies as the news of the appointment of Richard Haass, one of the senior members of the administration of George H.W. Bush and one of the men of former Secretary of State James Baker, to the position of envoy in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

12. Gaza Crisis:

Summary:

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: QThose who want to create a Palestinian state living peaceably with Israel could ... reasonably conclude that what Palestinians need foremost is some kind of trusteeship to help them create a civil society, accountable institutions, transparent government... and political socialization toward tolerance.

Very liberal columnist Gideon Levy wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QAll those who supported this war and all those who objected to it should unite in the cry, QEnough.

Prominent liberal author A. B. Yehoshua addressed Gideon Levy on page one of HaQaretz: QPlease, preserve the moral authority and concern that you possessed, and your distinctive voice. We will need them again in the future, which promises further ordeals on the road to peace.

Block Quotes:

1I. QFatah to the Rescue?

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (1/16): QThough Fatah denounces Israel's battle with Hamas in the most venomous terms, the West Bank masses are said to be fuming that Fatah won't let them confront Israel directly. QThis will irreparably damage its standing in the eyes of Palestinians...Q an Arab expert told The Christian Science Monitor. In other words, many ordinary Palestinians want Fatah to again lead them into another violent uprising -- despite the devastation a third intifada would bring down on them. Never mind that the standard of living in the West Bank is better than it has been in years. So the problem is not just a PA demonstrably incapable of reforming itself, or a politically toxic Hamas; it is, more fundamentally, much of the Palestinian political culture. Those who want to create a Palestinian state living peaceably with Israel could, then, reasonably conclude that what Palestinians need foremost is some kind of trusteeship to help them create a civil society, accountable institutions, transparent government... and political socialization toward tolerance.

II. QStop the Madness

Very liberal columnist Gideon Levy wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (1/16): QSomeone has to stop this rampant madness. Right now. It may seem as though the cabinet hasn't decided on the Qthird stageQ of the war yet, [Israeli envoy] Amos Gilad is discussing a cease fire in Cairo, the end of the fighting seems close -- but all this is misleading.... Israel is arrogantly ignoring the Security Council's resolution calling for a cease-fire and is shelling the UN compound in Gaza, as if to show its real feeling toward that institution.... Whether or not we have accomplished anything in the war, now only the thirst for blood and lust for revenge speak out, together with the desperate longing for the Qvictory shotQ on the backs of hundreds and thousands of miserable civilians -- a picture that will never be achieved, even with another 100 assassinations of Hamas leaders, like Thursday. All those who supported this war and all those who objected to it should unite in the cry, QEnough.

III. QAn Open Letter to Gideon Levy

Prominent liberal author A. B. Yehoshua addressed Gideon Levy on page one of HaQaretz (1/16): QAll we are trying to do is get [HamasQs] leaders to stop this senseless and wicked aggression, and it is only because of the tragic and deliberate mingling between Hamas fighters and the civilian population that children, too, are unfortunately being killed. The fact is that since the disengagement, Hamas has fired only at civilians. Even in this war, to my astonishment, I see that they are not aiming at the army concentrations along the border but time and again at civilian communities. Please, preserve the moral authority and concern that you possessed, and your distinctive voice. We will need them again in the future, which promises further ordeals on the road to peace. In the meantime, it would be best for us all -- we and the Palestinians and the rest of the world -- to follow the simple moral imperative of Kantian philosophy: QAct only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.

CUNNINGHAM